

“. . . The Wazir of the city” (Daruga, presumably) “has sent to tell me that if I am agreeable to returning to it, I should let him know so that he could arrange it as I might like. “I replied to him that I would take neither that house, nor the Shah’s own residence, unless “the Shah give me a ‘farman’” (permitting) “the building of a church. . .”:

and two months later, in his letter of 14.5.1609, after referring to a certain Armenian named Khwajeh Shevelin [*? sic*], who with all his Christian folk, 250 households, had received him on a visit he paid to Julfa, he explained how he had been able to penetrate into this almost forbidden ground for non-Armenians:

“he has already got a house ready for me: it is on the suggestion of the Mihmandar that “I go to Julfa, and to the satisfaction of all the people of Julfa: under the colour of having “to go off to the king’s encampment I need a reliable house, where I can leave our effects “safely and instructions for the purchase at the proper time of the supplies” (firewood, etc., meant) “for the winter. In order to escape suspicions and inconveniences in this guise “I am going to and from Julfa. Khwajeh Shevelin wishes to purchase from the Shaikh of “Hurmuz in the island of Qishm two to three leagues of land, in order to make a place for “the settlement of Armenians and Syrians: when that is done, our Order will (be invited to) “make a foundation in the place in question, and a convent be purchased, the church of which “would have three naves for the Latins, Armenians and Syrians. This project Fr. Vincent “was to discuss with the Shaikh of Hurmuz.”

In June 1609 the pioneer Carmelites received their first reinforcement from Europe—it will have been already noted in the letter of the Praepositus General Ferdinand of S. Mary (18.10.1608) that he was dispatching Frs. Redempt of the Cross and Benignus of S. Michael. The former was a cousin of the first Commissary-general of the Congregation of Italy, Fr. Peter of the Mother of God, who had played such a part in committing it to a missionary effort, and like him an Aragonese. He had been already a canon of his cathedral town in Spain when, sent to Rome on some business for it in 1605 and permitted to occupy his cousin’s cell during the latter’s stay in the Vatican as confessor to the Cardinals in conclave for the election of Leo XI, he had become so attracted by the Carmelite Observance as to enter their Order forthwith. Fr. Benignus was a Roman. Jointly they produced, and signed at Isfahan 10.8.1609, a report¹ and narrative of their journey—in Italian, and therefore no doubt written down by the second of these Fathers—parts of which will be quoted because of the light they shed on the state of Syria and Mesopotamia in this year and conditions of travel.

They had made the voyage from Marseilles (16.12.1608) by the same vessel which had brought back to Europe Fr. Paul Simon, a sailing-ship of Marseilles called the *S. Victor*: and the day after the Epiphany, i.e. 7.1.1609, they disembarked at Alexandretta, which at that time was a rather small and ill-arranged hamlet of 80 to 100 ‘houses’, many of them of thatch and boughs, only three, very small ones, being walled. Yet merchants collected there from various parts of the world, and cotton and raw hides were brought in from all around, so that there was an almost continual market: the usual local inhabitants were Armenians, Greek and Syrian Christians, and Turkish peasants, all beyond measure poverty-stricken, so that for the most part they went half naked, and not a few of them used to perish of hunger. Each of these races, however, had its own church and priests, no less miserable and poor than themselves: there were no less than three vice-consuls resident, representing France, Venice and England, who

“administered justice and protected and looked after the interests of their own nationals “arriving there with merchandize, or those in vessels flying their flags. But one single “Janissary was the sole representative of the Sultan of Turkey, and he with great dignity “discharged the office of preventing contraband² goods from being shipped.”

¹ O.C.D. 234 e².

² The word *contrabanda* is used—already a legal term in 1609.